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First Committee

5th Meeting
Wednesday, 13 October 1999, 3 p.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. González . . . . . (Chile)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda items 64, 65 and 67 to 85 *(continued)*

General debate on all disarmament and international security items

Mr. Vohidov (Uzbekistan) *(spoke in Russian)*: I am delighted, Mr. Chairman, to congratulate you on your election to your responsible and important post. My delegation is confident that, with your rich diplomatic experience and wide knowledge of disarmament and international security, under your skilful guidance we will have a fruitful and constructive dialogue on the items on the Committee's agenda at this session. Let me also congratulate all the other members of the Bureau on their election. I should also like to thank last year's Chairman, Mr. André Mernier, and the other members of the Bureau last year for their skilful guidance of the Committee's work.

This session of the Committee is taking place in an atmosphere of heightened attention to disarmament issues by the international community. This year is very crucial for all of us. This session of the Committee is even more significant, if only because it is the last in this millennium. In order to usher in the next century in a worthy manner we must do our utmost to achieve the speedy implementation of the noble goals we have set ourselves.

It is true that on the threshold of the twenty-first century the international community has achieved significant successes in the maintenance of international security and disarmament. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Conventions on the prohibition of biological and chemical weapons, as well as other international instruments, are proof of this. But many vital questions are still being considered and have yet to be resolved, and the international community still faces the need to resolve many global problems and challenges that seriously threaten international peace and security, so we must avoid feeling self-satisfied and complacent. We must show firm political will, make more active efforts to strengthen what we have already achieved, and make further concrete and significant progress in disarmament and non-proliferation.

The Republic of Uzbekistan is firmly convinced that the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty are documents of fundamental importance in the field of disarmament and thus in the maintenance of international peace and security. In this connection, Uzbekistan fully shares and supports the principles and objectives reaffirmed at the 1995 NPT Review Conference, which are that nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament should be implemented and that there should be international cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. On the basis of our position of principle that the nuclear non-proliferation regime should be strengthened, Uzbekistan is in favour of the speedy entry into force of the CTBT and of a global commitment to the NPT.

Uzbekistan is one of the first 10 States to ratify the CTBT. This shows not only our deep understanding of the

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importance of this Treaty, but also our desire to make a real contribution towards resolving the problems of nuclear non-proliferation, improving the ecological condition of the planet and strengthening global security and regional stability. For that reason our Republic, one of the States that asked the Secretary-General to convene the international Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the CTBT, welcomed the Conference's recently completed work in Vienna.

Uzbekistan also welcomes the decision of the General Assembly, in its resolution 53/77 E, to convene an international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects. Uzbekistan believes that the excessive accumulation and proliferation of small arms and light weapons poses a serious threat to international peace and security and significantly limits the prospects for steady and sustainable development in many parts of the world, particularly in conflict areas.

In recent years the issue of establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones has become firmly rooted in the international disarmament agenda. The importance of such zones in strengthening global and regional peace and security has been reaffirmed in many international instruments, including the Final Document of the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the documents of the three sessions of the Preparatory Committee for the year 2000 NPT Review Conference. The agenda for this session of the First Committee gives further confirmation. This question will undoubtedly be one of the basic issues facing the NPT Review Conference in the year 2000.

In this connection, Uzbekistan welcomes the progress that has been made in implementing and strengthening nuclear-weapon-free zones in various parts of the world — in Latin America, Africa and the Asia-Pacific region. The position of Uzbekistan is based on its conviction that the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones, on the basis of arrangements freely entered into between the States of the regions concerned, represents the integral tool of the mechanism of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament and will substantially help to strengthen regional and international peace and security.

Uzbekistan consistently takes steps to maintain peace and strengthen security in Central Asia. These include the initiative to declare Central Asia a nuclear-weapon-free zone. Significant progress has already been made in realizing this idea. Since last year's session of the First Committee a group of experts from the Central Asian States on the question of creating a Central Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone, with the active assistance of the United Nations Secretariat, in particular the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, has held a number of intensive consultative meetings with experts from international organizations. As a result, it has been possible to find common ground on all aspects of the treaty to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia.

The last of the series of meetings in this process was held a few days ago, from 5 to 8 October, in Sapporo, Japan. During the meeting the experts conducted very intensive and productive discussions on reaching agreement on many provisions of the treaty to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. The draft was elaborated following earlier meetings of experts. May I express sincere gratitude to the Government of Japan for the hospitality and assistance provided to us during that meeting.

In this respect, I should like especially to note resolution 53/77 A, adopted by consensus last December, in which the General Assembly expressed the conviction that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones could contribute to the achievement of general and complete disarmament, and that the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States within the region, and taking into account the special characteristics of the region, could enhance the security of the States involved and strengthen global and regional security and peace.

The General Assembly also called upon all States to support the initiative aimed at the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia and commended the concrete steps taken by the States of the region towards the realization of their initiative.

In this connection, I should like to thank the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Dhanapala, and through him the whole United Nations Department for Disarmament Affairs. In particular, I should like to express gratitude to the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific for the assistance it gave us in elaborating the treaty on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. I also express the firm support of the Republic of Uzbekistan for the work of the United Nations

Regional Centre. This is being carried out pursuant to General Assembly resolution 50/71 D, which stipulated in paragraph 3:

> "the Director of the Regional Centre ... should operate as before until a reliable means can be found to finance the operational needs of the Regional Centre".

I should like to take this opportunity to thank all delegations which have welcomed and expressed support for our initiative to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. I hope that States Members will support the draft resolution on the subject. That draft resolution is now being worked on, with the collective efforts of the Central Asian countries, and it will in due course be submitted by the five States of Central Asia for the attention of the members of the First Committee.

In the field of nuclear non-proliferation — apart from the CTBT and the NPT — Uzbekistan is also a party to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material. The agreement between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on the application of safeguards in connection with the NPT has been strengthened by the signing of the Additional Protocol in 1998. Strengthening the regime for the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and preventing an increase in the number of countries possessing nuclear weapons are the basic priorities of our policy with regard to international peace and security. The Republic of Uzbekistan, as the initiator of the establishment of the Central Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone, feels a responsibility for strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime and intends to participate actively in the process of making real progress in disarmament.

In conclusion, I assure you, Mr. Chairman, of the full support and close cooperation of my delegation in your efforts to achieve successful results in the work of this session of the First Committee.

Mr. Akinsanya (Nigeria): The Nigerian delegation wishes at the outset to extend sincere congratulations to you, Mr. Chairman, and the other members of the Bureau, upon your election. We are confident that with your rich experience and diplomatic skills our deliberations will have a successful conclusion. You are assured of the support and cooperation of the Nigerian delegation.

We also appreciate the statement made by the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Dhanapala, at the beginning of the session and thank him for it.

As in previous years, the Nigerian delegation attaches great importance to the work of this Committee. We believe that the ultimate goal of general and complete disarmament, which should remain our central focus, is attainable, given the much needed political will of all States, especially the nuclear-weapon States. A world free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction remains a legitimate expectation, which should serve the security interests of all States. It is, however, a matter of regret that the high hopes for peace dividends anticipated as a result of the end of the cold war have been dashed due to the persistent arms build-up, both nuclear and conventional, and the retention of huge arsenals by the nuclear-weapon States. My delegation believes that the Committee should strike the right chord at the beginning and set the right priorities if we are to meet the hopes and aspirations of the overwhelming majority of the international community.

As we approach the new millennium, mankind is still living with fear and insecurity, internecine wars and intra-State conflicts, accentuated by an arms build-up and heightened by nuclear tests. At a time when the developing countries are faced with the serious challenges of globalization, poverty and development, the world is still witnessing the pursuit of military doctrines and scientific research that lead to new weapons systems and nuclear proliferation. This, to say the least, is unacceptable.

As a developing country, Nigeria is firmly committed to a non-proliferation regime. We continue to pursue with vigour our strong advocacy for general and complete disarmament. In the early stages of our independence Nigeria was one of the early opponents of the nuclear tests conducted in Africa, and in this regard we remain committed to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Nigeria's ratification of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the signing of the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, the Treaty of Pelindaba, further attests to our commitment to building a nuclear-weapon-free world. In this connection, the machinery has been set in motion for Nigeria's ratification of the Pelindaba Treaty. We have also ratified the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), and would urge other States to do the same.

At the close of the twentieth century there is a need to take stock of disarmament activities that have taken place during the past decade. This decade marks the fifty-third

anniversary of the United Nations General Assembly's first resolution calling for the elimination of nuclear weapons. It also marks the twenty-first anniversary of the adoption of the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-I). It was the decade in which the Secretary-General submitted to the General Assembly a report (A/51/950) entitled "Renewing the United Nations: a programme for reform", which included various disarmament measures.

That is not all. It was also in this decade that African leaders endorsed the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, the Treaty of Pelindaba. Three other nuclear-weapon-free zones — in Latin America and the Caribbean, the South Pacific and South-East Asia — became a reality, thereby not only enhancing regional peace and security but also prohibiting the horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons. It was the decade that marked the indefinite extension of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and witnessed the successful negotiation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. It also marked the entry into force of the Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel landmines.

Those landmarks were possible only because of the shared concern of members of the international community to build a stable and peaceful world, free from nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. Regrettably, despite these achievements, there remains a long list of grave concerns that demand our immediate attention. They include the failure in 1999 of the Conference on Disarmament, the sole multilateral negotiating forum, for the third year in succession, to adopt a programme of work. This failure is due to the lack of consensus on nuclear disarmament and on outer space and to the lack of political will. It is our view in this regard that certain working procedures of the Conference on Disarmament are not suitable and need to be reviewed if we are to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Other concerns are: the stalled START process and the non-ratification of START II; the delayed entry into force of the CTBT; nuclear doctrines which are bound to complicate efforts towards nuclear disarmament; the non-accession to the NPT by some States; the doubtful viability of the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, which has been described as the cornerstone of strategic stability; the challenges to existing disarmament treaties; and, last, the development of long-range missiles and their testing by several countries, together with the development of missile defences.

However, disappointing though the current situation is, Nigeria has not lost hope in our collective ability to explore and find common ground on how to deal with the unfinished business of the outgoing millennium.

Permit me now to touch on an issue of paramount importance to my delegation. For Nigeria the priority remains to craft a new security and disarmament agenda for the twenty-first century. Such an agenda, in our view, must be comprehensive. The current agenda, which has lasted for a period of 21 years, was based on the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-I) of 1978. The contents of this vital document need to be revisited to enable us to develop new strategies. It is evident that we all agree in principle on the need for a new agenda. However, the problem lies with the divergent views expressed on the content of such an agenda. Ideally, a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-IV) could set universal goals and principles for the agenda ahead. But, as we are all aware, the United Nations Disarmament Commission at its last session could not reach a consensus on the convening of an SSOD-IV. In the absence of such a consensus, my delegation would suggest that we should make the best use of the opportunity provided by the Millennium Summit, which is scheduled to be held in September next year, to set new goals. In this connection, my delegation is aware that disarmament will be among the principal themes to be addressed in the report that the Secretary-General will be preparing for that Summit. We therefore urge like-minded countries to come together to identify and discuss what is achievable during the Millennium Summit.

Conventional weapons provide the means by which countries defend themselves. But these easy-to-use tools in conflicts are also responsible for an estimated 90 per cent of all conflict-related deaths and injuries, 80 per cent of those victims being women and children. The control of conventional weapons therefore calls for concerted international action. It is the view of my delegation that calling for control of conventional weapons on the one hand and pursuing an aggressive arms sales policy on the other is a disservice to the cause of peace and a negation of the principle of honesty of intent by arms-exporting countries. Using arms sales to pursue political strategies cannot but promote instability, especially in developing countries. Such action also encourages the illicit arms trade.

In the context of the West African subregion, Nigeria participated in the UN-sponsored workshop on illicit trafficking in small arms that took place in Lomé, Togo,

from 2 to 5 August 1999. Nigeria considered the recommendations of the workshop and intends to pursue monitoring measures in the following areas: first, entering into bilateral agreements with contiguous States to check the illicit trade in small arms; secondly, the licensing of small arms to include locally fabricated arms; thirdly, the maintenance of a register of manufacturers of locally produced arms; and, lastly, sensitizing the population to the need to report the illicit trafficking in small arms to the appropriate authorities.

Consistent with our peacekeeping and peace-building efforts in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) region, my country is also interested in practical disarmament measures, such as the collection and destruction of small arms. This can reduce the potential for violence and enhance stability, thus facilitating the development process. In this connection, in July this year my President, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, witnessed a ceremony in Liberia during which 1,500 usable weapons collected from the warring factions were destroyed. In addition, 30,000 unserviceable arms are to be converted to farm implements by a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) aid project.

My delegation welcomes the decision to convene an international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects not later than the year 2001. We will work with other member States in the preparatory committee to be established during the current session.

We are also delighted to note the progress made on the Ottawa Anti-personnel Landmines Convention, which came into force in March 1999. We align ourselves with those pursuing the total elimination of landmines, because of their devastating effect on innocent lives, especially those of women and children. In this regard, we believe that Africa, and indeed the whole world, should be made safe for our children to walk freely in their playgrounds and for our peasants to be able to cultivate the land in order to feed their communities. Nigeria is therefore committed to acceding to the Convention as soon as possible.

In concluding, I wish to refer to the statement by my President to the General Assembly on 23 September 1999:

> "At the close of the twentieth century and the beginning of the third millennium, there is a need for stocktaking and for proper assessment of the implementation of previous resolutions emanating especially from the major world summits and conferences which took place in this decade. Such an effort would bring us closer to the realization of the purposes and objectives of our Organization." (*PV.10, pp. 11-12*)

It is in this context that Nigeria will continue its efforts within the United Nations to pursue the purposes and principles of the Charter.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): First, Mr. Chairman, I wish to associate myself with those delegations which have already expressed satisfaction at your election to your post and wish you and all the other members of the Bureau fruitful work. We hope that all delegations will help to promote this.

Our waning century has been one of rapid evolution, having bequeathed us unprecedented achievements in scientific and technical progress and opened for mankind the door to other worlds. But we remember also other things. For example, we remember the millions of people who died in two world wars and in countless regional conflicts, which still rage today.

It is in this century that mankind has begun collectively to look for the answer to the principal question it has been asking itself: how to put an end to wars and give all the people of planet Earth a chance to live in peace and prosperity. Unfortunately, no universal answer to this question has yet been found. That is why Russia invites all countries to engage in dialogue in order to develop a concept of peace for the twenty-first century. The thrust of President Yeltsin's initiative is to create a new culture based on common values, where the highest priority of all peoples and States should be a world without wars and conflicts. The central role in the formation and realization of this concept would be played by the United Nations, the only universal mechanism for regulating international relations. Clearly, the problems of disarmament and international security play a key role here.

We see three main tasks in this sphere: strict compliance with disarmament agreements already concluded; a step-by-step reduction, with the ultimate goal of their elimination, of weapons of mass destruction, under strict and effective international control, together with a limitation of other types of weapons; and the prevention of an escalation of the arms race in new spheres.

For more than a quarter of a century the key element of strategic stability and the most important prerequisite for reducing strategic offensive weapons has been the Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems, the

ABM Treaty. Since it came into existence the ABM Treaty has demonstrated its vitality and its effectiveness. Under the Treaty mutual restraint by parties in the area of anti-ballistic missile defence systems has made it possible to stop the strategic offensive arms race, substantially reduce offensive strategic weapons, and now, in addition, to maintain a dialogue about continuing the process.

The Russian Federation has consistently favoured the reduction and limitation of nuclear arsenals, and in good faith has been complying with its obligations under the START I Treaty. We consider it important that START II and related instruments be ratified by the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation and the procedures necessary for ratification be fulfilled by the United States Congress.

Provided strategic stability is maintained, the process of reducing and limiting strategic offensive weapons would have very promising prospects. Here I should like to remind members of Russia's readiness to engage in negotiations to reduce strategic offensive weapons on the basis of the basic elements defined at the meeting between the Presidents of Russia and the United States which took place in Helsinki in March 1997 and reaffirmed in Cologne in June 1999.

Russia is prepared to envisage within the framework of the future START III Treaty the reduction of the overall threshold to 1,500 warheads — that is, we would carry out even deeper cuts in nuclear arms than the ones envisaged in Helsinki.

All of these achievements and prospects are directly connected with compliance with the central provision of the ABM Treaty, the obligation not to deploy an ABM system on the territory of one's country and not to create the basis for this defence. Attempts to revise and violate the central provision would in practice mean subversion of the Treaty. In that case it would become impossible to implement START I and START II. In essence, the whole structure of the agreements, the strategic defensive arms reduction and limitation treaties, would be destroyed. The disarmament dialogue would virtually revert to the point of departure back in the period of the cold war. The whole set of international agreements on non-proliferation and arms control would be under threat. Moreover, new factors would arise which could destabilize the international situation at the global and regional levels.

We are aware of the danger of the spread and increased sophistication of missiles and missile technology. Russia supports the efforts being made by many countries to strengthen the missile non-proliferation regime. For our part, we propose to establish a global system to control the spread of missiles and missile technology that would include in particular a regime for the notification of ballistic missile launches. Unfortunately, plans to develop national ABM systems could have the opposite effect, stimulating the creation and proliferation of more sophisticated missiles.

Mindful of all these extremely negative consequences for all countries — and I stress "for all countries" — Russia calls upon the General Assembly to speak out in favour of maintaining and strengthening the ABM Treaty. Our delegation, together with the delegations of Belarus and China, has circulated a clear, non-confrontational draft resolution based on the language of the ABM Treaty itself and on joint statements made by the Presidents of the Russian Federation and the United States on this subject. We count on the broadest possible support for it, and invite other delegations to join us as co-sponsors of the draft.

In general, we consider that maintaining the integrity of the disarmament treaties is a key task. Russia is against attempts, under any pretext, to revise or dilute the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) or cast doubt on the decision regarding its indefinite and unconditional extension. We believe that the NPT Treaty review process, as we prepare for the conference to be held in the year 2000, should be directed towards strengthening the Treaty and should promote implementation of the decisions taken by the 1995 NPT Review Conference.

We consider it important to take joint steps for the speedy entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). We are in favour of the accession to the CTBT of India and Pakistan, as non-nuclear States, as well as of other countries which have not yet acceded but whose participation is necessary for its entry into force.

Russia welcomes the process of establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones in various regions of the world. We respect the status of the present nuclear-weapon-free zones. Under bilateral agreements with Mongolia, Russia has recognized Mongolia's non-nuclear status. We are prepared to consider, together with other countries, providing appropriate security assurances to Mongolia.

We support initiatives to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones in Central Asia, the Middle East and other regions as we do the proposal for a nuclear-weapon-free space in Central and Eastern Europe. We think that when establishing new nuclear-weapon-free zones we should be

guided by internationally agreed principles and practice and existing treaty commitments in the area of security. The creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones is the best way for States to receive legally binding security assurances. We are also prepared to consider the question of developing effective international arrangements on security assurances for non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, and of starting work on this at the Conference on Disarmament.

It is quite obvious that today the main threat to peace stems from aggressive nationalism, separatism, terrorism and extremism, which recognize no borders and sow death and destruction. There is very good reason, therefore, why the central matter on the agenda of various forums is now the problem of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. Russia recognizes the importance and relevance of this problem, which we know from our own experience. The United Nations must play a leading role in preventing and limiting the uncontrolled spread of small arms and light weapons. It is desirable to elaborate a global approach, to harmonize the efforts of States to resolve the tasks of establishing a mechanism of international cooperation in this area.

As a first step we need to concentrate on halting illicit arms transfers. Such transfers are the basic source of small arms and light weapons for bandit groups, criminal elements and extremists. It is precisely these illegal transfers that are used to violate arms embargoes imposed by the Security Council. Russia supports the proposal to hold in 2001 a conference on the illicit arms trade.

While attaching special importance to coordinating preventive measures in order to prevent an arms race in new spheres, Russia supports proposals to reconstitute the Ad Hoc Committee on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space within the framework of the Conference on Disarmament in order to elaborate a multilateral agreement or agreements on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. The preventive approach requires an analysis of the consequences of the rapid development and wide application of the latest information and telecommunication technologies in order to prevent their use for purposes inconsistent with the objectives of the maintenance of international security.

On Russia's initiative, we discussed in the First Committee at the fifty-third session of the General Assembly the problems of international information security. We are grateful to all States that responded to the appeal in resolution 53/70 and communicated to the Secretary-General their views on a general evaluation of the problem of information security, a definition of the basic concepts in this area, and the advisability of developing international principles which would enhance the security of global information systems. We are also grateful to the Department for Disarmament Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat — and I am happy to welcome here Mr. Dhanapala, the Under-Secretary-General — and to the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), which organized and held in Geneva in August 1999 a representative meeting of experts on international information security. Pursuant to the results of work done during this year, Russia intends to submit to the First Committee at this session a draft resolution aimed at further examination, within the United Nations context, of the issue of information security. We count on further support from all delegations in our joint work on this topical subject.

Mr. Shen Guofang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): May I begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee at the current session of the General Assembly. I am confident that with your rich experience and outstanding diplomatic skills you will steer this session to success. The Chinese delegation assures you and the other members of the Bureau of its full cooperation in a bid to contribute to the success of the session.

I also wish to express my gratitude to Ambassador Mernier for the excellent job he did as Chairman of the First Committee at the last session.

Since the last session the international situation has undergone profound and complex change. The cold-war mentality is still present, coupled with new developments in hegemonism and power politics, thus making the world even less stable.

In Europe the only military bloc left over from the cold war, under its new strategic concept, bypassed the United Nations Security Council and bombed, with the world's most powerful and sophisticated military machinery, a weak sovereign State, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, turning the Balkan region, which has experienced so much misery in this century, into a testing ground for its new strategy.

In Asia certain individual countries are pressing rapidly ahead in their joint theatre missile defence development programme in a bid to further strengthen their military alliance in the region, which should otherwise have died out with the end of the cold war. There has also been

a tendency to become inclined to actively intervene in surrounding areas.

In North America the vigorous and accelerated pursuit of the so-called missile defence programme, to the detriment of strategic stability, has presented grave challenges to the Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems (ABM Treaty). The negative developments that I have mentioned have in our view worsened the international security environment, created urgent desires on the part of other countries to obtain high-efficiency weapons as soon as possible, and have thus constituted an obstacle to the sound development of the international arms control and disarmament process.

International arms control and disarmament are now at a crossroads. What course should be taken? That is a pressing issue of concern common to the international community. We are of the view that the relaxation of the international situation and the arms control process are mutually reinforcing and supportive. The old security concept based on military alliances and an arms build-up will not help to resolve any problem. We are not in favour of any attempts to seek, using certain excuses, military strength that goes beyond legitimate self-defence needs. Likewise, we are also against any attempt unilaterally to seek absolute security advantages for one country or bloc by limiting and weakening other countries under the pretext of arms reduction and non-proliferation. We believe that to promote the disarmament process, to prevent the arms race and safeguard international security, it is imperative that a new security concept, in line with the changed international situation, be established.

President Jiang Zemin of the People's Republic of China pointed out in his statement at a plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva on 26 March this year that the core of such a new security concept should be mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and cooperation. The five principles of peaceful coexistence make up the political foundation underpinning world peace; mutually beneficial cooperation and common prosperity constitute the economic guarantee for world peace; dialogue, consultations and negotiations between the parties concerned on an equal footing represent the correct approach to resolving disputes and safeguarding peace. In this context, we call on the international community to take this new security concept as a guideline. Only by so doing can it ensure that the arms control and disarmament process will move in the correct direction, thus safeguarding world peace and security.

I now wish to outline China's views on some major issues which are under review by the First Committee. At the current session the Committee will consider a series of draft resolutions pertaining to nuclear disarmament. The elimination of nuclear weapons represents the common aspiration of people all over the world. However, the nuclear disarmament process between the United States and Russia, after making certain, temporary progress, is now bogged down in a stalemate, which is coupled with new nuclear tests after the conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Such developments clearly indicate that to promote nuclear disarmament and prevent nuclear proliferation remains a formidable task for the international community, not only now, but also for a fairly long time to come.

Here I wish to reiterate our views on the next step for nuclear disarmament, as pointed out by President Jiang Zemin in his statement, which is that countries with the largest nuclear arsenals in the world should continue to take the lead to drastically cut down their respective nuclear arsenals and refrain from improving the quality of nuclear weapons and developing such weapons; negotiate and conclude a fissile material cut-off treaty to cap the quantity of nuclear weapons; ensure the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons through the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), while comprehensively promoting the attainment of all the objectives of the NPT; negotiate and conclude an international legal instrument on unconditional non-first-use of nuclear weapons, non-use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States or nuclear-weapon-free zones, and a comprehensive prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons; and ultimately to move to negotiate and conclude a treaty on the comprehensive prohibition of nuclear weapons, so as to genuinely achieve the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

To achieve that goal, it is essential that all countries should act on the principles of maintaining global strategic stability and safeguarding the security interests of all countries. Only by so doing can they ensure that sustained progress will be registered in the nuclear disarmament process. The vigorous development and proliferation of advanced missile defence systems obviously will not contribute to international nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation endeavour. On the contrary, it will only poison the atmosphere and the conditions required for movement in the nuclear disarmament process and threaten an arms race at an even more advanced level.

The comprehensive prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons should, in our view, be the

ultimate goal of the international community, because if nuclear weapons are eliminated there will be no proliferation of them, nor will there be a proliferation of long-range missiles or a missile threat. In the final analysis, therefore, to reduce the threat to peace it is desirable to devote more efforts to disarmament per se, instead of otherwise.

China was subjected to nuclear threat and blackmail on several occasions in the 1950s and 1960s, and was thus compelled to develop a limited number of nuclear weapons. It is against this backdrop that we have throughout adopted a responsible attitude towards the question of nuclear weapons and have made our due contribution to promoting nuclear disarmament. China has always pursued the policy of no-first-use of nuclear weapons at any time or under any conditions; no participation in the nuclear arms race; and no deployment of nuclear weapons outside its territory. China's nuclear weapons are purely for self-defence purposes; they do not constitute any threat to anyone. Moreover, China's extremely limited number of nuclear weapons are placed under strict control, and there is no risk of an accidental launch.

It should be pointed out that the overall international environment of peace, security, stability and trust is a must when talking about measures such as transparency in nuclear arsenals and de-alerting nuclear weapons. Therefore, such measures should, naturally, be linked with the nuclear disarmament negotiation process. At present there is a very wide gap between the nuclear-weapon States in terms of their nuclear strength. A certain country is pursuing its nuclear deterrence policy based on the first use of nuclear weapons, while vigorously developing its missile defence systems, to the detriment of the strategic balance. It also wantonly resorts to, or threatens to use, force in international relations. Under such circumstances, it is both premature and unfair to indiscriminately call for the adoption of open and transparent measures on the nuclear front. We should be alert and ensure that nuclear disarmament is not led astray. The recently published report of the Tokyo Forum, for instance, is quite lopsided and has biased views. Many of its arguments are neither just nor fair and deviate from the purposes of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. In this context, China cannot but register its opposition.

China has all along attached importance to the question of the prevention of an arms race in outer space, and is particularly concerned over the latest developments on this front. A certain country has, on the one hand, tried hard to block the re-establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space at the Conference on Disarmament, while on the other hand it has pressed rapidly ahead in pursuit of its outer space and missile defence programmes, in an attempt to seek military advantage on the ground through dominating and controlling outer space. The developments in the vigorous pursuit of missile defence systems since the beginning of this year are most disturbing. The international community is confronted with the danger of the weaponization of outer space and the repudiation of the ABM Treaty. In such circumstances, there is a pressing need for the international community to find ways to strengthen its efforts to prevent an arms race in outer space.

At its last session, in adopting resolution 53/76, the General Assembly urged the Conference on Disarmament to re-establish the Ad Hoc Committee on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space and reiterated the need for the Conference on Disarmament to play a major role in concluding a multilateral legal instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. However, to our regret, at its 1999 session the Conference on Disarmament failed to re-establish the Ad Hoc Committee, due to the obstruction of a certain individual country. We maintain that the relevant General Assembly resolution to be adopted this year should continue to urge the Conference on Disarmament to re-establish the Ad Hoc Committee at an early date next year and immediately begin its substantive work so as to reverse the negative developments in the field of the prevention of an arms race in outer space and missile defence. We also maintain that at its current session it should take measures to preserve the integrity and validity of the ABM Treaty.

The Chinese delegation supports efforts to comprehensively strengthen the effectiveness of the Biological Weapons Convention and to establish a fair, reasonable, appropriate and feasible verification mechanism. To this end, it is imperative that the balance between the rights and obligations of the States parties be taken fully into account so as to prevent the abusive use of verification and to protect the legitimate security and economic interests of all States parties. In the meantime, it is also very important to enhance international cooperation and exchange in the field of biology. It remains our objective to conclude negotiations on the protocol before the Fifth Review Conference of the Convention. The key to progress in negotiations lies in the full accommodation of each other's legitimate concerns by all parties. To place undue emphasis on speed and table the so-called "clean text" prematurely while there are still major disputes

between the parties can only be counter-productive. China wishes to continue its earnest negotiations on the basis of the existing rolling text in a bid to help to bring about a good protocol, acceptable to all.

It is two years since the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) entered into force, but its universality is yet to be further promoted. A few countries, especially one with a major chemical industry, have failed to submit their initial declarations on civilian chemical industries in accordance with the Convention. A certain country has made various reservations through domestic legislation when implementing the Convention. The chemical weapons abandoned by Japan in China are still threatening the life and property of the Chinese people as well as the ecological environment. This issue, left over from history, should be resolved at the earliest possible date. In this context, we call on the countries concerned to face those problems squarely and earnestly work to implement the Convention in full.

The issue of small arms has become one of increasing concern to the international community. China also attaches importance to it. The problem of small arms involves factors across a wide spectrum, from disarmament and security to social and economic development, thus calling for a comprehensive and integrated approach through concerted efforts by the international community and effective measures at international, regional and subregional levels in accordance with the specific situations of different countries and regions. Such measures could include, for instance, the prohibition of the illegal manufacture and transfer of small arms, the strengthening of control over legal manufacturing and the transfer and collection of weapons in post-conflict regions. Last July the United Nations Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms concluded its report with many useful suggestions. China, as a member of the Group, actively participated in the discussion. We believe that the report will provide useful ideas for the international community to handle the problem of small arms in the future.

China has consistently supported imposing proper and rational restrictions on the use of anti-personnel landmines. To this end, China has ratified the amended landmine protocol (Protocol II) and the new additional protocol on blinding laser weapons to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW). The two instruments of ratification were deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations last November. In addition, China is about to submit to the Secretary-General its annual report on the implementation of the landmine Protocol. It will also actively participate in the first annual conference of the States parties, to be held by the end of this year.

China is of the view that, in addition to improving international law and imposing strict restrictions on the use and transfer of landmines, the most pressing task before us now is to assist mine-affected countries to clear abandoned mines that are threatening the lives of civilians. With this in view, China has contributed funds earmarked for demining activities in Bosnia and Herzegovina to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance. In addition, the first demining training workshop co-sponsored by the United Nations and China has just been held in Nanjing, China, with trainees from Cambodia, Namibia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and other mine-affected countries. These trainees will, upon completion of their training, be able to contribute to cleaning up their land and to the livelihood of their fellow countrymen.

China has all along attached importance to the role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament, and is appreciative of the great efforts made by the Department for Disarmament Affairs in this regard, especially the efforts made by the Under-Secretary-General. Since 1988 China has annually contributed to relevant disarmament institutions of the United Nations as a means of rendering its support. This year China will once again contribute $10,000 to the Department for Disarmament Affairs, which we hope will be channelled to fund the United Nations disarmament fellowship programme.

The international disarmament endeavour is at a crucial juncture as we move into the next century. In international relations we must be firm and resolute in opposing and abandoning the practices of hegemonism, power politics, armed invasion or interference and the pursuit of absolute military security. Only by so doing can we, in the final analysis, maintain international peace and stability and secure sustained progress in disarmament. And only by so doing can mankind be immune from the threat of an arms race and war and see ushered in a new century in which all countries and the whole of mankind will be able to enjoy long-lasting peace, universal security and common prosperity.

Mr. Petrella (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Argentina is particularly pleased to see you, Sir, presiding over the Committee's work. You represent Chile, a great, friendly country, with which through political will we are building a mature relationship of integration based on respect and mutual trust. We have no doubt that with your skill, background and extensive experience you will guide

our work with wisdom and effectiveness. I also convey my congratulations to the other members of the Bureau, the representatives of Germany, Lithuania, the Sudan and the Philippines, and also to Ambassador Mernier of Belgium for the way in which he guided our work during the last session of the General Assembly.

I should like first to emphasize how pleased we are with the dynamism that Under-Secretary-General Dhanapala has brought to the Department for Disarmament Affairs, and with his invaluable cooperation with the Security Council. We agree with his affirmation of the vital role that the United Nations must play in the defence of existing norms of peace and security and in shaping the necessary political will to establish new agreements.

It is both strange and contradictory that just when we felt that the non-proliferation regime was on track serious threats to it are emerging. This is inadmissible. Unfortunately, we remain concerned at the persistence of situations involving a risk of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, jeopardizing the internal security of States and regional and global stability. On the eve of the new millennium, renouncing weapons of mass destruction constitutes the highest priority.

Argentina, as one of the countries that, having mastered the entire nuclear fuel cycle, decided to set limits on itself, will continue tirelessly to appeal to all States to renounce the nuclear option and give unequivocal guarantees that nuclear capacity will be used exclusively for peaceful purposes. In addition, Argentina will continue to work for strict compliance in good faith with the commitments entered into in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC), the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (CWC), and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

In this respect, we are following with special interest the debate now going on in political and academic circles, and among the public, in the United States concerning ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, since that debate reflects the sensibilities, political difficulties and balances involved in disarmament issues. We are convinced that timely ratification by the United States will give a decisive impetus to the Treaty's entry into force. Achieving its universality is a legitimate aspiration of the international community, one which we actively promote. Argentina will also continue to promote the prompt initiation of negotiations on a convention for the prohibition and destruction of fissile material, in order to implement the decisions taken at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the parties to the NPT.

The excessive accumulation of conventional weapons, in particular small arms, is both a consequence of tension or conflict and a cause of their aggravation or prolongation. On every occasion when it has been a member of the Security Council, Argentina has sought to support the Council's concrete contributions, in accordance with the high responsibility that being a member entails. This year important open debates have been held on disarmament, demobilization and the reintegration of ex-combatants, as well as on small arms. On those occasions Argentina has endeavoured to emphasize the negative impact of the accumulation of weapons on human security and on sustainable development. In this context, we support the holding of an international conference, no later than 2001, to deal with the issue of the illicit arms trade in all its aspects.

The problem of anti-personnel landmines is far from being resolved, but at least the international community has succeeded in giving a global response through the Ottawa Convention. That is why Argentina decided to join those countries that are working hard to make the attainment of the Convention's objective possible, together with cooperating in mine clearance and assistance to victims. These are fundamental and complementary aspects of alleviating suffering and opening the way to development. In this context, on 14 September Argentina ratified the Ottawa Convention, fulfilling a commitment made in the Declaration establishing the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR) countries, and Bolivia and Chile, as a zone of peace: to move towards establishing the MERCOSUR countries, and Bolivia and Chile, as a zone free of anti-personnel landmines, and to seek to extend that status to the entire hemisphere.

The transition stage we are going through is resulting in a redefinition of the United Nations, regional structures and national States and in their adaptation to new international conditions and a new international system. We must all engage in dialogue and consultation in order to contribute positively to harmonizing views on the future global security system. We therefore consider it a privilege that under our chairmanship the Conference on Disarmament was able to agree on that body's expansion. We take this opportunity once again to congratulate

Ecuador, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Malaysia and Tunisia and to thank them for their contribution to the work of the Conference.

As we have said on previous occasions, no dialogue or progress is possible without peace. It would seem that at last the world has understood that conflict and violence undermine the prospects for development. Let us not lose this opportunity. The international scene presents significant challenges, as the Committee's agenda clearly shows. The list of issues that my delegation has just raised is not exhaustive. In due course we will make more detailed comments.

We have no doubt that this will be a fruitful session of the First Committee. To that end, Mr. Chairman, please be assured of my delegation's complete cooperation.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): Before calling on the next speaker, I should like to make two appeals on important matters. I think that in doing so I am stating not simply my view but the consensus view of all delegations.

First, it would be better if representatives did not carry on conversations at the back of the room. All delegations deserve our utmost respect and all make extremely important contributions. It is very difficult for the Chairman to be faced with the dilemma of whether to interrupt a speaker to ask for quiet. Representatives could very well conduct their conversations outside. It is a question of the minimum of respect for delegations. I should like to establish this principle from the very outset of our meetings.

Secondly, some representatives are interrupted when addressing the Committee, because others move right in front of them, without any consideration for those making the statements that are so appreciated by us all.

Mr. Izquierdo (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): First may I tell you, Mr. Chairman, on behalf of my delegation and on my own behalf, how pleased we are to see you presiding over the work of the First Committee at this important session of the General Assembly, the last of the millennium. I reiterate my delegation's readiness to cooperate fully with you. We are convinced that you will achieve the success to which we all aspire. I also wish to congratulate all the other members of the Bureau on their election. My delegation wants to express very special thanks to Ambassador Dhanapala for his presence here in our debate and for his constant support of the work of all the United Nations disarmament forums.

In order to have faith in the future, we must recall and reaffirm the important steps that are steadily being taken in the field of disarmament. For example, in 1999 the international community made some progress which it is fitting to highlight briefly. Particularly noteworthy was the success, even if only partial, achieved during the third session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), in agreeing on various fundamental matters that will make it possible from the very outset of that conference to do advanced work, bearing in mind the many complex matters that will be dealt with. Unfortunately, the success was not complete, because agreement was not reached on recommendations concerning substantive matters.

We are delighted that the Conference on Disarmament resolved the matter of the expansion of its membership, with the acceptance, by consensus, of the admission of Ireland, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Tunisia and Ecuador. For Ecuador this means recognition of its active participation in all disarmament forums, particularly in the General Assembly, where it has maintained a consistent line of conduct expressed in the unswerving defence of principles. That stance will be maintained by my country in its contribution to the Conference on Disarmament, together with its constant readiness to cooperate in all efforts whose objective is the attainment of disarmament, understanding among peoples and respect among nations.

We are also pleased with the success achieved by the United Nations Disarmament Commission at its 1999 substantive session, where consensus was reached on the adoption of two significant texts. The first concerns the guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N. The second concerns the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned. The Disarmament Commission, the specialized deliberative organ within the United Nations multilateral disarmament machinery, has made a significant contribution by adopting a range of specific recommendations. These are aimed at future action to be implemented by the international community within the overall framework for the consolidation of peace through the application of concrete disarmament measures and the consolidation of the non-proliferation regime.

An important development is the entry into force of the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use,

Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. The success achieved at the First Meeting of the States Parties, held in Maputo, in establishing an inter-sessional programme of work, will facilitate the Convention's full implementation.

My country has assumed its obligations under that important Convention, beginning full implementation with the creation of Ecuador's mine clearance centre, just two weeks ago. Its aim is to provide humanitarian assistance to the victims, ensure better structuring of mine-clearance tasks, coordinate the various bodies involved in the matter and try to make the best possible use of international assistance.

My delegation cannot fail to make particular mention of the fact that a year ago this very month the peace agreement between Ecuador and Peru was signed. It resolved a century-old territorial conflict, opening the door to close friendship, cooperation and partnership in the shared struggle for the development of our peoples. This new reality, which is an example to the world, overcomes a past of distrust and consolidates a future of peace; it means the elimination of the threat of war and the implementation of a disarmament programme, and allows the full use of financial resources for human development.

As for the First Committee's agenda this year, we believe that innumerable, difficult issues remain pending. I wish to refer briefly to a few which my delegation believes will be the focus of attention in our debates and action.

Ecuador regards as indispensable the implementation and verification of obligations undertaken by States through international arms limitation, disarmament and non-proliferation instruments. There is therefore an urgent need to establish competent mechanisms enabling the detection and resolution of problems stemming from non-compliance.

The total, unrestricted implementation of such agreements is essential to the process of general and complete disarmament, for which humankind is working so hard. Non-compliance with agreements on arms limitations, disarmament and non-proliferation threatens international peace and stability. My country is convinced that it is not possible to make significant progress on disarmament unless the qualitative and quantitative arms race is effectively halted. In this respect, scientific and technological advances must exclusively serve peaceful objectives. Bearing in mind that over 75 per cent of military might is concentrated in the hands of the major Powers, we must ensure that conventional disarmament is complemented by measures and initiatives that are global in scale.

In the same context, Ecuador is particularly concerned about imbalances in the military arsenals of countries of one region which, far from promoting greater security for those with the biggest arsenals, in the end increase the insecurity and instability of the entire region.

The phenomenon of small arms and light weapons is a universal source of concern. We attach special significance to the 1999 report (A/54/258) of the Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms. It is essential to establish mechanisms to impose restrictions relating to the production and marketing of those weapons on State-authorized arms traders and producers. The illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons, as well as their stockpiling and criminal and indiscriminate use, is a great scourge afflicting our societies. It is therefore necessary to make a universal effort at control, through firm norms and greater regional and universal cooperation.

The victims of this phenomenon are almost 100 per cent civilians. Eight out of ten of those killed are women and children. These weapons are used basically in internal conflicts and in carrying out criminal acts, where their use is uncontrollable. The statistics on the trade in them are certainly alarming. In this context, Ecuador strongly supports the holding of an international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects in 2001. Here my delegation agrees with the representative of Mexico, who two days ago expressed support for the Preparatory Committee's mandate being

> "to define the objectives, scope and start date of the negotiations on the rolling text to be approved by the conference". (*A/C.1/54/PV.5*)

Ecuador pledges its active cooperation and participation in the work of that conference.

As is stated in the document adopted this year by the Disarmament Commission, the important contribution of nuclear-weapon-free zones to the strengthening of the international non-proliferation regime and to peace and security, regional and global, has been universally recognized. As is well known, 107 States have signed or are parties to the treaties establishing the existing nuclear-weapon-free zones, which cover more than 50 per cent of the earth's land mass. Ecuador advocates the consolidation and improvement of these zones, established by the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok and Pelindaba. We

support recognition of the example given by the declaration of Mongolia as a nuclear-weapon-free State and the development and completion of the processes of establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones in the Middle East and Central Asia, efforts that my country firmly supports. In this context, my delegation will continue to support and cooperate in the attainment of the objectives of the nuclear-weapon-free initiative with regard to the southern hemisphere and adjacent areas, because this is a real, solid way to strengthen the non-proliferation regime in a space that is increasingly genuinely free of nuclear weapons.

Any proposal that can promote nuclear disarmament should be welcomed. We therefore support the initiative on the need for a new agenda towards a nuclear-weapon-free world. We believe that there should be an uninterrupted process towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons, together with a renunciation of the development and deployment of nuclear weapons and other actions that endanger international peace and security.

In this respect, my country believes that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) constitutes the essential non-proliferation and disarmament system. Therefore, universal, unconditional adherence to it is urgently needed. We encourage the few countries that have not yet adhered to it to do so without delay. Moreover, countries whose participation is essential should adhere to and ratify unconditionally and without delay the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), so that it may soon enter into force. The lack of the necessary ratifications causes enormous disappointment and delays the efforts being made by the international community to bring about a safer world. In the Conference on Disarmament my country will advocate the prompt initiation of negotiations on a non-discriminatory, multilateral, effective and internationally verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other explosive devices, the cut-off treaty, taking into account the objectives of non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. This new instrument would complete a broad universal, basic body of norms in the nuclear sphere.

My delegation deplores the fact that the Disarmament Commission at its substantive session this year was unable to achieve final consensus on the subject of convening a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-IV), which is so necessary. However, we commend the serious efforts made by the relevant working group, whose work we believe will in any event provide fundamental elements for the United Nations to do continued work on this effort, which will undoubtedly be of enormous benefit to the international community.

Ecuador supports the work that has been done, and can continue to be done, by the regional centres for peace and disarmament – in particular the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, which has its headquarters in Lima, Peru – in the implementation of programmes of education and dissemination of information aimed at promoting regional peace and security and confidence-building.

Lastly, my delegation reaffirms its full support for the principles of international humanitarian law and congratulates the Security Council on its initiative in holding last month a broad and important debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, a matter that we believe should receive greater concern and attention from the international community.

Mr. Niehaus (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): First, may I congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, and through you Chile, on your well-deserved election to preside over the Committee's work. We are convinced that your recognized ability will enable you to lead our work to a successful conclusion. I assure you of the continued cooperation of my delegation. We also extend our congratulations to the other members of the Bureau and express our appreciation to the outgoing Chairman, Ambassador Mernier of Belgium.

Disarmament in all its forms, demilitarization and the reduction of military expenditures are of the utmost importance to my country. Our national experience has taught us that not investing in arms is the best policy for countries really committed to the well-being of their peoples. We believe that the promotion of peace and security, both at the international level and at the domestic level, requires a resolute policy of reducing military expenditures and strengthening civil authority. For 50 years Costa Rica has spent nothing on weapons and has devoted its public expenditures to education, preventive health and the infrastructure.

That is why disarmament, both nuclear and conventional, is one of the fundamental principles of our foreign policy. Our national experience has convinced us that organized international society must focus its efforts on the attainment of this noble objective. The reduction of military expenditures is particularly important for the developing States. Our resources are scarce and must not be mismanaged. We must invest intensely and

systematically in our human resources. We must fight for economic development, social justice and democratic institutions. In this context, armed forces are a heavy burden on our budgets, in addition to being a constant source of tension and repression. Would it not be better to devote to health the $191 billion that the developing countries squander on their armed forces? Would it not be better to allocate to education the $22 billion spent on arms transfers to the third world? Our historical experience makes us witness to, and an example of, the multifaceted and positive relationship between disarmament and development.

In the sphere of conventional disarmament, my country advocates the adoption of measures to combat arms transfers that undermine national and regional security and development. The countries that produce and market arms must exercise effective control over their exports. In this respect, regional and subregional cooperation to combat the illicit production of and trade in arms is indispensable. We support the widening of the Register of Conventional Arms. We also support prohibiting transfers of *matériel*, military personnel and financial and logistical support to States whose military or paramilitary units or security forces are involved in violations of human rights, or contribute to them. That prohibition should also be extended to those States that do not respect minimum democratic and civic guarantees. We believe that arms exports to countries that do not declare their transfers to the United Nations must be prohibited. In addition, that prohibition should be extended to States that have not signed the main instruments of human rights, international humanitarian law and disarmament.

We support the initiative to introduce an international code of conduct on arms transfers, adopted and endorsed by a group of Nobel Prize winners, including the former President of Costa Rica, Dr. Oscar Arias. We believe that all these measures should be incorporated into an international agreement binding on all arms-producing States. Nonetheless, we are pleased to note the unilateral adoption of some of these measures, in particular by the European Union.

As for small arms and light weapons, we believe that all States must adopt measures to control and restrict the use, possession and transfer of all types of small arms and to gather and destroy as many of them as possible. We support the holding of an international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects, at the latest by the year 2001, with a view to adopting a legally binding instrument. We are in favour of the recommendations of the Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms on that possible international conference.

With regard to anti-personnel landmines, we appeal to those States that have not yet ratified the Ottawa Convention to do so as soon as possible. My Government firmly supports the various projects aimed at eradicating definitively this type of cruel and indiscriminate weapon. In this context, the international community must continue to support demining programmes, programmes to assist victims and education for the population at risk.

In respect of nuclear disarmament, my delegation is concerned about nuclear testing in South Asia. We strongly and energetically appeal to those States that are not yet parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to immediately cease developing nuclear weapons and as soon as possible unconditionally adhere to that international instrument. Likewise, we appeal to all States that have not yet ratified or signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) to do so soon. Nuclear-weapon States have a particular obligation to ratify or sign that Treaty and thus show their leadership in the international community. Their ratification is indispensable if we are to avoid a new arms race. We are convinced that the Treaty's entry into force is an urgently needed step to guarantee the security of all humankind. We note and support the majority appeal made for prompt ratification of this Treaty last week in Vienna during the Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Furthermore, my delegation trusts in the goodwill of all participants in the preparatory process of the NPT review conference with regard to adopting concrete measures to reduce the nuclear risk and reactivate negotiations on nuclear disarmament. We also trust in the will to extend, strengthen and respect nuclear-weapon-free zones and to meet the wishes of States that want to establish new zones.

In the present circumstances of international policy, nuclear weapons are neither strategically nor logistically useful. States with a nuclear capacity must recognize that fact and reduce their dependency on such weapons. If they do it will be easier for them truly to commit themselves to nuclear disarmament negotiations, adopt a no-first-use policy, deactivate their offensive systems and halt the development of a new nuclear arsenal. These States must begin a progressive, systematic and firm process of dismantling their arsenals of weapons of mass destruction.

My country has made of disarmament something more than a foreign policy objective. We are a country that has

been disarmed for 50 years, and for this reason at both the national and international level we are consistently and invariably committed to disarmament in all its forms. We believe that the arms race is contrary to the objectives of peace, security and development of the modern world. We appeal again for the economic resources that the world today devotes to conventional and nuclear weapons to be devoted in future to promoting genuine economic and social development and equity for all peoples.

Mr. Salazar (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your election to preside over this important Committee. We are convinced that with your experience our work under your leadership will be brought to a successful conclusion. To this end, I offer you the complete support of my delegation. I also thank Mr. Dhanapala, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, for the magnificent work he has done in a very short period, and also for the important initiatives and projects undertaken since he assumed the leadership of the Department for Disarmament Affairs.

The arms race which characterized the confrontation between the two antagonistic blocs during the cold war kept the world in a state of impotence, and with a fatalistic attitude, as regards the possibility of achieving effective disarmament measures. The relaxation of international tension now gives States new incentives to reduce the production and acquisition of weapons and reallocate to socially productive purposes resources that had been devoted to armaments. Today we see the possibility of reaching multilateral agreements that could resolve problems persisting from the past as well as the new problems that have emerged on the international scene.

As we approach the end of this century, which surely will be remembered as the one in which mankind developed and used its most powerful weapon yet, the nuclear weapon, we must lay the foundation for a new collective consciousness directed towards the quest for peace and security by means other than armed confrontation, and give thought to the realities and contradictions involved in the disarmament process.

The current international situation offers the potential for accomplishing the goals established by the international community in the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-I). We must not bequeath to our children a world in which expenditure on arms acquisitions and researching and developing new weapons is much greater than investments in social development, education and the eradication of poverty. As the Secretary-General once rightly asked, where is the logic in producing arms, when the best prospect is that they will never be used? That applies particularly to nuclear weapons, which cannot be used without causing a world catastrophe. It does not seem to be an intelligent way to use either the world's resources or the human person's technological capacity.

The international community has wasted at least two clear opportunities to rid itself of these terrible weapons: first, in 1945, after their first use and after their awful effects had been seen, and, secondly, at the end of the cold war. How many more opportunities must we lose before we become fully aware of the irrationality of the very existence of these weapons?

But the era of disarmament has yet to come. Countries still think in terms of military alliances and strategic defence doctrines involving the use of nuclear weapons. In addition, technological developments are proposed that pose the risk not only of transforming outer space into an area of military confrontation, but also of altering the precarious existing strategic balance. In other words, in spite of advances in regard to prohibiting certain types of weapons, we are far from approaching the ideal world, in which resources and technology would be devoted to education for peace, medical developments and the eradication of hunger and poverty.

On the subject of small arms, we are no longer in the era of the novel "The Red and the Black"; war no longer gives dignity to anyone, although for some it continues to be a way to get rich, a way that is not only illicit, but criminal. Once conquering the enemy was a symbol of bravery, strength and courage, but to kill women and children, as happens in most conflicts today, brings no honour. Combat has left the battlefields and entered the villages and towns. The warriors become child soldiers. The enemy is no longer represented by armies, but by the civilian population.

The trafficking in and excessive circulation of small arms are scourges that jeopardize the well-being of a population and the social and economic order of the affected countries, and have a negative impact on international peace and security. As a result, consideration of these problems has gained a political impetus, as was seen in the ministerial debate just a few weeks ago in the Security Council.

Colombia attaches great importance to the international conference on the illicit arms trade to be held no later than

2001, in accordance with resolution 53/77 E. We welcome the report (A/54/258) of the Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms, submitted by the Secretary-General, and its recommendations, particularly on the objectives and scope of the conference. It is now necessary to begin the preparatory process, to set a specific date and venue for the conference, its agenda, scope, objectives and expected outcome.

I turn to the subject of nuclear weapons. Next year the review conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) will be held here in New York. Although we made significant progress at the third preparatory meeting, the expectation of substantive results at the review conference is of vital importance to the nuclear non-proliferation regime. The conference in the year 2000 will be the first review conference following the adoption of the indefinite extension. It is necessary to strengthen the review process as part of the 1995 agreements, combining a broad concept of global security with the prospect of a world free of nuclear weapons.

The nuclear tests held last year in South Asia are a challenge to the non-proliferation regime, and unless the international community can show progress in a true process of nuclear disarmament we run the risk of a setback in the advances made with the NPT in the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. The international community must clearly see that there is an agenda for nuclear disarmament, and it requires a deeper commitment by the nuclear-weapon States.

The Conference on Disarmament closed its 1999 session without reaching agreement on its programme of work. There was only agreement on the admission of five new members, which brings the composition of the Conference to 66 members. Nonetheless, those who argue that a larger membership hampers the negotiating capacity of the Conference on Disarmament, or its efficiency, are mistaken. Colombia considers that the Conference on Disarmament should be open to all States wishing to participate. It is not the number of members that hinders its work, but lack of political will and of a clear commitment by some countries to disarmament.

I come now to the question of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. Although the Disarmament Commission was unable to reach consensus on the objectives and agenda for such a session, we remain of the view that it is necessary to take advantage of the work done so far and to press for a consensus that will allow the session to be convened in the not too distant future. A fourth special session would allow us to consider, among other threats to international peace and security, the continued modernization of certain types of weapons and the use of technological advances for military purposes.

On other arms control agreements, Colombia supports the negotiating process now under way in Geneva on a verification protocol for the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), which should be ready before the review conference to take place in the year 2001. In connection with the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), Colombia is making progress on ratification, which is now under consideration in our Congress.

Colombia is one of the 44 States listed in annex 2 of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, and hopes to complete the steps that will make it possible for us soon to ratify the Treaty. We supported and participated in the Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which was held last week in Vienna, and completely support its recommendations.

Colombia also signed the Ottawa Convention banning anti-personnel landmines, and is pressing forward with the process for its ratification. We participated as observers in the First Meeting of the parties, held in Maputo in May this year.

Colombia wishes to continue to contribute to the fashioning of instruments to make possible real progress on disarmament, because that is the only way in which we can move beyond the horrors of war and violence in a world that is clamouring for peace and security.

Mr. Al-Ghanim (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am pleased to extend to you, Mr. Chairman, on behalf of the delegation of the State of Kuwait, our warmest congratulations on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee at this session of the General Assembly. We are confident that your competence, experience and wide knowledge will help you to successfully guide the Committee's deliberations. You are assured of my delegation's serious and constructive cooperation in order to achieve the goals of the Committee. I am also pleased to extend our congratulations on their election to the other members of the Bureau and to wish them success. I also pay tribute to the considerable efforts made by the outgoing Chairman and other members of the Bureau, which were marked by a sincere wish to improve the conduct of the Committee's proceedings.

As we enter the third millennium, the rapid pace of international change and the interconnectedness and impact of States' interests highlight the need to strengthen ties of cooperation and solidarity at the international level, because international security is indivisible. The peaceful resolution of all conflicts is the sole means by which international security can be achieved in the face of such international challenges and circumstances. History has proved that international solidarity and cooperation are the two deterrents to any action that threatens international peace and security. The manifestations of international cooperation are more evident in the field of disarmament, which curbs bloodshed and the outbreak of wars in hotbeds of tension.

This century has been plagued by bitter memories of two world wars and many civil and regional wars and conflicts, whose victims have been millions of innocent people. The arms race, either for considerations of security or expansion, has eaten up the economies of the developing countries at the expense of their development and economic programmes. The proliferation of conventional weapons and the fervent desire of States to enhance their military arsenals cause concern and call for serious international cooperation to curb this phenomenon in a manner that will help to maintain international peace and security and enhance confidence-building among States and peoples. Support is needed for the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms as a mechanism to reduce military expenditures and channel the financial surplus to the development process in the developing countries, particularly in the light of the deteriorating economic situation in most countries.

Anti-personnel landmines cause us concern. The danger is not confined to military personnel in times of war, but goes far beyond that; they threaten international peace and security in different parts of the world. We call upon the international community to look for the best means to eliminate these mines. The people who planted them must give logistic and material support to clearing them. In this regard, the State of Kuwait calls for compliance with the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

The conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is a major step towards achieving the important, high-priority disarmament goals of the international community. It is also confirmation of the decisions concerning the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and disarmament taken on 11 May 1995. Kuwait, being one of the signatories to the CTBT, invites all States to sign the Treaty quickly. No action contrary to its spirit and principles should be taken. We urge all States Parties interested in the nuclear arms race to immediately ratify the treaties and conventions on halting the production, testing, transfer and stockpiling of these weapons, so that we may have a world free of such devastating weapons.

We also urge the establishment of a mechanism governing the importation, production and transfer of conventional weapons. I wish here to state that it is not enough to produce and sign these treaties; there must be a sincere desire for their implementation.

The declaration of the Middle East as a nuclear-weapon-free zone is a goal to which all Arab States aspire, yet this goal is impeded because of Israel's refusal to respond to the wishes of the States of the region and the international community. It refuses to accede to the NPT or place its nuclear installations under the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards regime. Therefore, my delegation calls upon the international community to continue to pressure Israel to abide by the wish of the international community to create a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, and thus spare the region the dangers that beset it and threaten its security and stability.

My delegation does not find it sufficient to call for a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East; it calls further for the dismantling of all weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, including biological and chemical weapons and fissile material, which cause more instability and tension in this important and vital area. The area has long experienced numerous conflicts and threats, the latest of which was Iraq's brutal invasion of Kuwait and the former's acquisition of chemical and biological weapons, which were used against the people of Iraq in the north, as was stated by Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General, on 12 October last year.

To secure a world free of lethal weapons of mass destruction, many States have acceded to conventions and treaties that curb the proliferation of such weapons. The Security Council has proved its important role in this field. A case in point is the provisions of international resolutions to make Iraq free from weapons of mass destruction, particularly after its invasion of the State of Kuwait. By the end of last January the Security Council had set up independent task forces to assess the extent to which Iraq had abided by its obligations under Security Council resolutions. The Secretary-General himself helped to select

the members of these teams, who are known for their experience, competence and impartiality. The team responsible for disarmament stated that a number of serious matters had not yet been settled. It also emphasized the need for the inspection teams to return to Iraq as soon as possible. We call upon Iraq to comply completely with Security Council resolutions related to its aggression against Kuwait, particularly the release of the prisoners of war, the restoration of plundered Kuwaiti property, and respect for the Security Council recommendations. This will lead to more stability and safety in the Gulf region.

We warily follow the balance of fear between India and Pakistan in conducting nuclear-weapons tests and long-range missiles. In this context, we call upon the two brotherly countries — the sagacity of whose leaders we trust will lead them to resort to wisdom and avoid being plunged into an arms race — to settle their differences peacefully.

The State of Kuwait welcomes the General Assembly resolution deciding to convene an international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects no later than 2001. We are of the view that this conference should follow a comprehensive approach to these problems by studying all aspects of the joint approach to reach its goals.

My delegation regrets the inability of the Conference on Disarmament to agree on an agenda, which led to its failure. In the hope of placing the public interests of the peoples of the world above narrow interests, we call upon all parties concerned to make more concessions in the course of the coming meetings, with a view to stressing the significant role played by the Conference on Disarmament in fostering international peace and security.

Mr. Pérez-Otermin (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Please accept my warmest congratulations, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee at the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly. We also congratulate Mr. André Mernier on his important contribution as Chairman of the Committee at the fifty-third session. Under your leadership, Sir, we have no doubt we will achieve positive results. Your recognized international experience is guarantee enough that the results will be substantive and relevant. Please be assured of my delegation's commitment to cooperate with you in every possible way.

It is nearly a decade since the collapse of the Berlin Wall and we still have not managed to eliminate the nuclear threat. That is disappointing and gives the Organization, among others, the enormous responsibility of ensuring that the concept of human security is not just an objective set out on paper. We know that on the threshold of a new millennium it is increasingly important to provide an accurate diagnosis of the challenges, commitments and responsibilities of the United Nations in disarmament matters. Strict compliance with the non-proliferation regime remains a cornerstone of macro-disarmament. It is neither admissible nor understandable that any State should, under any pretext, depart from this guiding principle.

In recent years there has been important progress on the prohibition of nuclear testing and adherence to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), although some States still show reluctance. Progress with regard to the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction is also significant. The First Meeting of States parties in Maputo continued that steady progress.

It is clear, today more than ever, that the only security that exists in the sphere of weapons of mass destruction is to take the clear-cut decision simply to eradicate such weapons, whose existence remains a threat to all life on the planet.

We find several challenges in the architecture of disarmament. The Secretary-General has already, in a very timely fashion, signalled a threat to international peace and security. It is necessary to achieve consensus so that new norms, negotiated at the multilateral level, can make it possible for the Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems to be a mechanism to prevent the further deployment of defensive systems.

Uruguay enthusiastically supported the Political Declaration establishing the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR) countries and Bolivia and Chile as a zone of peace. The Declaration, which was signed in the city of Ushuaia on 24 July 1998, established a means of support for non-proliferation activities in all relevant international forums. It reaffirmed full support for the Treaty of Tlatelolco and declared the region a zone free of weapons of mass destruction.

Among other commendable efforts, particular mention should be made of the draft resolution on a nuclear-weapon-free southern hemisphere and adjacent areas, submitted by the members of nuclear-weapon-free zones for the fourth consecutive time, which we hope will be given significant support by the majority of Member States.

With the objective of promoting these efforts, Uruguay completely adhered to the declaration "Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: the need for a new agenda", adopted on 9 June 1998 by the Foreign Ministers of Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, Slovenia, South Africa and Sweden. We are also pleased to have been part of the effort to conclude a protocol strengthening the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) through a rapid international response to prohibit the use of biological weapons. We believe that support for the work of the ad hoc group on this matter remains fundamental, and negotiations in this respect should be speeded up in order to support the initiative of Australia and New Zealand.

Rapid and effective action to halt the proliferation of small arms remains one of the most important challenges on the disarmament agenda in the coming months. Everyone is aware that this subject is as important as many others, since the proliferation and abuse of small arms and light weapons have reached alarming proportions. The number of deaths caused by these weapons is now almost equal to that caused by weapons of mass destruction.

The hemispheric contribution through the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking In Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials is already an important step, strengthened now by the Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions. MERCOSUR has made a special contribution in this respect, and is already applying the joint mechanism for registering buyers and sellers of firearms, ammunition, explosives and other related materials, which is binding on Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay. My delegation is convinced that the international community has an important role to play in this respect, and that if we do not diverge on sectoral grounds the present time may be conducive to joint action. In this respect, we consider that the international conference to be held no later than 2001 will be essential to implement measures to combat the illicit traffic in small arms. The forthcoming debate to establish the preparatory committee for that conference will be extremely significant.

The United Nations system has a major challenge to meet in this respect. We know that the task of the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs is not at all easy. Nonetheless, the experience, dedication and involvement in these issues of Ambassador Jayantha Dhanapala have meant advances in the delicate areas within his responsibility.

I wish to reiterate my country's commitment to the cause of general and complete disarmament, as well as the need for the progress already achieved to be consolidated and for further progress to be made as soon as possible. We all have a duty to ensure that in the next millennium we do not see the shameful toll in human lives that armed conflicts have taken in this century. Uruguay firmly believes in the need to replace the culture of conflict with the culture of peace. All our efforts will be worth while if we advance resolutely in that direction.

The meeting rose at 5.20 p.m.